

REMARKS
ON
AN ARTICLE INSERTED IN THE PAPERS
OF THE
SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY.

[The Shakespeare Society]



RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL

OF THE

PERCY SOCIETY.

“The attention of the Council of the Percy Society having been directed to an article on Massinger’s play of “Beleeve as You List,” inserted in the 4th volume of the Papers recently put forth by the Shakespeare Society, and having had laid before them copies of a Correspondence which has taken place between the Earl of Ellesmere, President of the Shakespeare Society, Mr. J. P. Collier, the Director of the Shakespeare Society, the Rev. A. Dyce, and Mr. Croker, and having carefully examined the passages referred to, and stated to be erroneous readings on the part of Mr. Croker in that play,—they feel themselves called upon to protest not only against the injustice of the anonymous criticism, but also against the proceeding, on the part of one literary society towards another, as calculated to excite ill feeling on the part of individual members, and ultimately to prove injurious to the interests of such institutions.”

STATEMENT

MADE TO THE COUNCIL OF THE PERCY SOCIETY,

5th April, 1849.

Having, before I had read an article in the Shakespeare Society's Papers, vol. iv. p. 133, reflecting on a publication of the Percy Society, prepared and printed the following errata for the consideration of the Council of the latter Society, as to whether it would be desirable the same should be issued to the members, and in what manner, it becomes my duty, after placing before the Council the correspondence* which the article has

* As every one must feel the use of what may be perhaps considered private letters justifiable in self-defence, it does not follow that they should be printed. The following abstract of the correspondence, taken from the indorsements of those laid before the Council, are therefore quite sufficient to explain the reference made to them :—

1. Copy of my Application to the Secretary of the Shakespeare Society, requesting the Council to furnish me with the name of the author of an anonymous article issued under their sanction.
—*March 12th, 1849.*

2. Reply from the Secretary, stating that the Council cannot comply with my request.—*March 13th.*

occasioned, again to submit to them the manuscript from which Massinger's play of "Believe as You List" has been edited under their sanction, and to request that the Council will do me the favour to express their opinion upon my competence or incompetence to read that manuscript correctly.

3. Copy of my letter to the Earl of Ellesmere, President of the Shakespeare Society, repeating my request for the name of the author of the anonymous article.—*March 14th.*

4. Mr. Payne Collier informing me, that he is the responsible editor of the volume wherein the article at which I had taken some offence appeared, &c.—*March 14th.*

5. Copy of my reply, informing Mr. Payne Collier, that, previous to receiving his letter, I had communicated with Lord Ellesmere on the subject.—*March 15th.*

6. Mr. Payne Collier, expressing his regret that I should have troubled his Lordship.—*March 17th.*

7. Copy of my letter to the Earl of Ellesmere, expressing my regret for having done so, if his Lordship agreed in opinion with Mr. Payne Collier.—*March 19th.*

8. Reply of the Earl of Ellesmere to my letter of the 14th of March.—*March 19th.*

9. Copy of my rejoinder to the Earl of Ellesmere, endeavouring to shew the injurious effect which must arise to both Societies by one Literary Association criticising the publications of another; and those criticisms being re-echoed in a periodical to which the Director and Treasurer of the Shakespeare Society are well-known contributors.—*March 22nd.*

10. Letter from the Rev. A. Dyce, disavowing the authorship of the article in question, which he had not even read.—*March 31st.*

11. Copy of my reply, assuring Mr. Dyce that this disavowal from him was perfectly unnecessary.—*April 2nd.*

E R R A T A

[In the same state as forwarded to the Earl of Ellesmere, with the exception of the introduction of this observation.]

In Massinger's "Beleeve as you List", printed for the Percy Society, No. 80, January 1849.

(,) Page ix, dele , after Elyard.

{ n for u } — 26, for "My father's sounds", read "My
{ e for d } father's sonnes".

(ol for d) — 26, 27, 28, for "ASOLRUBAL", read "ASDRUBAL."
(Correctly printed in pp. xiii, 32, and 33.)

(in for ni) — 45 (line 10 from bottom) for "deines", read
 "denies."

(i for c) — 52 (line 2 from top) for "Arsaies", read
 "Arsaces."

(k for t) — 72 (l. 4 from bottom) for "cakes", read "cates."

(w for rd) — 82 (l. 11 from bottom) for "ower", read "order."

(ur for ne) — 88 (line 11 from bottom) for "our sillable",
 read "one sillable."

(fin for pri) — 106, for "pride", read "finde."

(tr for ch) — — for "stroller", read "scholler."

In the article alluded to, as issued by the Shakespeare Society, there are thirteen distinct charges or insinuations made against me as an incompetent editor. The foregoing list of printer's errata, shews ten literal corrections made under the circumstances stated, and readily disposes of seven out of these thirteen charges or insinuations; the remaining six I am also prepared to deal with.

And here I may be allowed to add, that the President of the Shakespeare Society, after the inspection of this document which I had the honour to transmit for his Lordship's information, considers that I may very well content myself "with the explanation that my corrections were only accidentally anticipated by those of my reviewer," which his Lordship is pleased to add, "appears to be the fact."

As, however, the Shakespeare Society have, according to their President's statement, established a reviewer, and Mr. Payne Collier avows himself to be "the responsible editor of the last volume of the Shakespeare Society's Papers," or such review; thus standing forth to challenge criticism, he would, I submit, have no right to complain of any dissection of his edition of Shakespeare, or exposure of printer's blunders upon the supposed detection of which his literary reputation exists, had I any wish to retaliate.

But I have none; for every one must feel that in all criticism of this kind, involving philological difficulties and debated questions of the nicest character, it is

manifestly unfair to select particular instances, and thence infer the general conduct of editorship.

It would be the easiest task possible, not merely to charge, but to convict, the best authorities, or professedly the most careful editors, of far more important errors than the worst which have been laid to my charge. Let me request any one to turn to Mr. Collier's Shakespeare, vol. vii. p. 332, and direct his attention to that gentleman's entire ignorance of the common grammatical idiom *drink up*, which actually leads him to doubt that vinegar is intended by *esil*, which, being printed with a capital letter, of course implies that Mr. Collier believed that it was the river Yssell to be drunk up! A blunder so momentous as this is the more to be wondered at, when we have the benefit of Gifford's—the honest Gifford's, decisive note on the matter in his edition of Ben Jonson, vol. i. p. 122. And Mr. Collier's error respecting this word is the more extraordinary, because Shakespeare uses it elsewhere in the ordinary sense of vinegar. But the fact is that Mr. Collier's edition of Shakespeare—an author, recollect, most frequently edited, not the first edition from a newly-discovered manuscript—is replete with such oversights and blunders, that I intend discarding it from my library, as an edition likely to put any one out of temper. I will however try and keep mine, and avoid retaliation.

If, therefore, in dealing with the reputation of an eminent critic, a self-satisfied reader, a distinguished antiquary, and an accomplished editor, as the party

responsible for the charges urged against my ideal amanuensis, I hope Mr. Payne Collier will feel entirely convinced that I can only act in the same spirit of kindness, conciliation, courtesy, and amiable candour, so evidently displayed by him towards the editor of a "lost play of Massinger's", which he certainly himself appeared unable fluently to read when I had the pleasure of submitting the manuscript for his inspection. Indeed it was this evident incompetence on Mr. Collier's part,* that decided me to undertake the laborious task of editorship myself, instead of transferring it to that gentleman, as it was my intention to have done.

Whatever may now be thought or said upon the subject of the critical attack made upon my literary character in the name of the Shakespeare Society, I must feel the proud conviction that I have not abused the confidence of the Council of the Percy Society, and that I have endeavoured to perform my duty honestly and to the best of my ability, in compliance with their wishes, so far as circumstances have permitted.

The perhaps mistaken feeling on my part, that I was

* Mr. Collier's knowledge of manuscripts may be gathered from his reading of the account of Twelfth Night from Manningham's Diary, where Malvolio being mentioned, an allusion is made to "his gestures in smiling"; but Mr. Collier reads (Shakespeare, vol. iii. p. 317) "his gestures *inscribing*." This, be it remembered, is in a short extract from a very legible manuscript, not from a long copy of a very obscure one. It should be added that I derive my knowledge of this momentous blunder from Mr. Hunter's "New Illustrations of Shakespeare."

as competent to read and make a transcript of a manuscript of the time of Charles I, as any common copyist at twopence a page under Mr. Payne Collier's Directorship, induced me to devote such portions of what I could fairly call my leisure time for four years to reading and copying a manuscript of forty-eight folio pages.

I have therefore no apology to offer that my transcript was made hastily, although I have the fact to urge, as some apology for the printer's errata, that engagements and occupation of a pressing nature obliged me, in order to meet the arrangements of the Council of the Percy Society for the issue of No. lxxx on the 1st January, to pass the sheets of "Believe as you List" very rapidly through the press,—so rapidly, that I doubt if I even read the proof of my Preface, which I observe was dated the day it was written, 30th December, 1848, and I certainly did not see a revise of the last sheet, in which three of the thirteen most serious charges of incompetency made against me occur. The errata which I detected, while the sheet was at press, in pp. 26, 27, and 28, of *Asolrubal* for *Asdrubal*, to which the name was of course subsequently corrected, did not appear to me to be of such importance as to call upon the funds of the Society for the expense of a cancel.

But what am I not entitled to say to my Critic, or the responsible Editor of the "Shakespeare Society's papers," who upon this obvious misprint of *ol* for *d*, actually in his charge asserts that the name "*Asorubal*" should always have been *Asdrubal*. Can Mr. Collier

shew to the Shakespeare Society that the name has been or is so printed in the Percy Society's volume, or as he asserts, with an o for a d?

Am I not fairly entitled, then, delicately to inquire if he, the responsible Editor, who cannot read and copy print correctly, may not in his free and fearless course of editorship confound an i with a j, a c with a b, and heaven knows what else, to suit his own notions of orthography, and imagine a g which might or might not have existed in a manuscript he had seen, could appreciate, but did not understand? And does he not, when commenting upon any literal inaccuracy I may have overlooked in printing the name Asdrubal, fairly lay himself open to the retort of having made what would be treated at a police office as a false charge, which however I am quite certain no gentleman could intentionally have been guilty of, although I have known such things done by anonymous writers in periodical reviews, and sometimes feel shocked at observing notices of such matters in the newspapers.

I leave my critic to comment upon my commas as he pleases, and to make sense or nonsense of Massinger, at the reader's discretion; my preface explains why the punctuation cannot be consistent, and shews my reason for having adopted a different style, commencing with sheet D.

Under the circumstances in which I am placed, I refrain from making any charges, and will confine myself to repelling the remaining six, hitherto unnoticed, brought against my competency as an

Editor ; these in general exhibit a lamentable deficiency of recollection and a curious want of knowledge, as well as taste, coupled with a love of puerile conjecture. Why, for instance, should my critic be ignorant of the history of the King of Bohemia, and waste so many words in strutting about "a late and sad example" ?

The Council of the Percy Society have, however, before them the means of satisfying themselves by reference to the manuscript from which I have edited Massinger's supposed lost play, whether what I shall proceed to state is correct or not ; and as no insinuation has been made that I have forged the manuscript, I suppose its genuineness is not doubted by the Shakespeare Society.

I pass over the erudite remarks offered by my critic for the information of the members of that Society, such as that an *u* was formerly used instead of a *v* ; that "eyes" were often of old spelt "eies," &c., because I am quite convinced that every member of the Percy Society must be aware of these facts.

The doubt expressed as to the interchange of *w* and *v* in manuscripts of this period, in such words as "*wast*," p. 4, "*lawolta*," p. 66, &c., is lamentable ; I refrain from saying more. Let Mr. Collier turn to his own edition of Shakespeare, vol. vii, p. 209, and he will find that *vast*, in Hamlet, act i, sc. 2, is misprinted *wast* or *waste*, in the old copies, subsequent to that of 1603. And that gentleman attributes it to a "very easy" compositor's error. Can Mr. Collier shew

the arrangement of a printer's case of letters in 1600? Certainly from what is now supposed to have been the old arrangement of printers' cases, no letters could be less accidentally mistaken than v and w. In fact the arrangement seems to have been made to prevent this possibility. For my part, I am inclined to attribute the indiscriminate use of the letters v and w to a very different cause.

In the passage "Theis pulled out", p. 63, my critic is pleased to assert that "the word 'eyes' has been evidently omitted". This does not appear to me to be quite so evident; although "the eyes pulled out" is the evident meaning of the passage, which was written as I have printed it, and, I believe, was so written, to give a quick or passionate expression to the words "Th' eis", the original transcriber having omitted the apostrophe.

It is stated, and it would appear not without consideration, by my critic, that "lonely", at p. 73, is misprinted for "lovely", which he endeavours to shew, after explaining certain facts which every member of the Percy Society must at once admit to be perfectly correct, that the turning of the letter n forms an u, and that u was formerly used instead of v; adding, rather unnecessarily, as it appears to me, in a tone of triumph, "such must have been the case".

Now, I feel satisfied that such has not been the case, and that I have not only correctly read, but that the printer has correctly rendered the word in question *lonely*: and a more poetical or beautiful reading I

cannot conceive. But my critic would drag down Massinger to the level of his own "*lovely*" mind if he could. The meaning of the passage in which the word occurs, may be taken in simple prose as "So alone, so *solitary* in you is that feeling of pity". What can be more dignified? (remember, they are the words of fallen royalty, addressed to a courtesan); and compare them with the wretched pertness of "So lovely, so *beautiful* in you is that feeling of pity"—which would almost tempt any one to add to such "must-have-been-the-case" editorship as this, for the completion of the sentence, and "my darling you are."

DEMETRI for DEMETRIUS, p. 13, requires no comment. It is so in the manuscript.

Conjure,—p. 107, "the last mistake of the kind" my kind critic thinks proper to notice,—he is pleased to inform the members of the Shakespeare Society should be "fortune". Now, I assert, and the proof is before the Council of the Percy Society, that whatever the word in the manuscript may be, it is not fortune. "Conjure", although I cannot at the moment produce the example, I have certainly somewhere seen used for "applause", "clapping of hands". I admit, however, this to be a conjectural reading of mine; the word is clearly enough written *Consure*, and Mr. Halliwell (no mean authority) thinks it a transcriber's error for *censure*.

And now, sixthly and lastly, for the word "inglinge," p. 16, which my critic asserts "ought unquestionably to be 'jugling' or 'juggling.'" Flaminus is talking to

Berecinthius, the priest of Cybele, of the mysteries of his religion. Surely my critic is ignorant that the mysteries of this goddess were of a character which might justify the epithet given to them by Massinger; but which would have no point if that applied to them by the Shakespeare Society's reviewer were admitted to be the reading. Of course, the new Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries must be aware of this. "Inglinge," however, is unquestionably the word used in the manuscript, and, although Dyce, Gifford, and Halliwell are quoted as authorities to shew that I cannot read or understand correctly a manuscript of the time of Charles I, and the *Athenæum*, therefore, considers me to be an incompetent editor, I think my anonymous critic, or critics, ought not to have omitted to consult Nares, as the respectable authority followed by Mr. Payne Collier in his "Yssell" draught.

Shade of Gifford arise, and defend an honest editor.
 Arise, and shield the memory of Massinger from the
 "juggling mysteries" of the Shakespeare Society!

T. CROFTON CROKER.

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 Old Brompton.

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1707

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1849

c.1